



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 11, 2003

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**Design Refinements, Environmental Effects of Improving I-405 in
North Renton Subject of Open House on Sept. 17**

SEATTLE - Congestion relief for I-405 traffic is a two-phased process. In the first phase, the state is investing \$485 million of the new nickel gas tax funds to improve I-405 traffic chokepoints approaching SR167, and through sections of Bellevue and Kirkland. This work is in design, with construction to begin in 2006.

The state is also moving forward with design refinements and environmental review of a larger, 10-year Phase II plan that will add two lanes in each direction on I-405, create a new type of all-day bus service called bus rapid transit from Lynnwood to Seatac Airport, and greatly expand regular bus, carpool, and vanpool operations.

On September 17, at 4 p.m., the public is invited to an open house at the Kennydale Elementary School to get an update on the progress of the "nickel projects" and comment on potential design features and environmental impacts of the Phase II program. The North Renton Environmental Assessment is funded in part by grants from the City of Renton and the Federal Highway and Transit Administrations.

Transportation Commissioner George Kargianis, who has chaired the I-405 Executive Committee in developing the I-405 Master Plan, expressed enthusiasm about the benefits I-405 travelers will realize. "The nickel gas tax projects will improve traffic conditions at three major "hot spots" in the I-405 corridor. In Bellevue, speeds could increase by as much as 15 mph. In Kirkland traffic should move 25 mph faster. Renton traffic will see a significant decline in the current 10 to 12 hours of congestion it faces every day."

Phase II of the I-405 program will build on these benefits. Two new traffic lanes in each direction from I-90 to SR167 are planned, with one new lane to be added from SR167 to I-5. A bus rapid transit line, with distinctive buses running every 10 minutes on dedicated HOV lanes and access ramps, is planned to serve the I-405 corridor from Lynnwood to Seatac Airport, with two stations planned for Renton. Dedicated high-occupancy highway exits and entrances, park and rides, and hundreds of new vanpools will greatly improve reliability and access to transit, and speed up general purpose traffic at the same time.

The early start environmental process means that once funding is secured for Phase II work, the project can proceed directly to design and construction, saving a year in time and construction cost escalation. Regional funding is anticipated through a public vote now in development by the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID), along with other federal and state funding sources. I-405 and other major transportation investments are part of the RTID three-county plan

that voters must approve before construction can begin on this phase of work. The earliest a public vote is anticipated is fall 2004.

The I-405 program was approved last year by the Federal Highway and Transit Administrations, following a three-year Environmental Impact Statement process. This means that environmental assessments for individual projects along the corridor, such as the North Renton section, can proceed quickly.

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